Reviewer's report

Title: Ecological study on socio-economic indicators and prevalence of asthma among schoolchildren in urban Brazil

Version: 2  Date: 10 May 2007

Reviewer: Dirceu Solé

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a very interesting study which evaluates the relationship between the prevalence of asthma - identified by the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC) - and some health and socioeconomic indicators in Brazilian schoolchildren aged from 6 to 7 years and from 13 to 14 years.

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Major Compulsory Revisions:

Authors haven’t mentioned the previous study by Stewart et al about the relationship between per capita Gross National Product (GNP) and the prevalence of symptoms of asthma and other atopic diseases in children utilizing the ISAAC phase 1 database, as in the present study (both age periods; Int J Epidemiol 2001;30:173-9). Stewart et al observed positive associations, of moderate strength, between per capita GNP (1993) and atopic symptoms.

Data on prevalence of asthma were obtained from population-based surveys on asthma and allergic diseases conducted in Brazil applying ISAAC protocol. Asthma was defined as recommended by ISAAC protocol: reported wheezing in the last 12 months. Although some of these centers have modified the ISAAC’s standard written questionnaire (question # 6: has ever had asthma?) this might not interfere with the study. If authors have looked for data published in medical databases (PubMed and Scielo) and in the annals of scientific meetings, why they haven’t searched thesis about this topic?

According to the centers that have been evaluated to be included in this study, it is necessary to clarify which one would be selected because it seems that the centers from reference # 19 and # 21 are the same; data from reference # 30 and reference # 29 are included in reference # 22; and data from reference # 25 is included in reference # 24.

Other point to clarify is about the data from Recife. In this center there are results from phases 1 and 3. Both data were included? If yes, this wouldn’t cause an interference with the results?

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests